## THE PRESENT-DAY NEIGHBORHOOD

By the 1950s, the area known as the Fort Pickering neighborhood was considered blighted, and the Federal government began acquiring land to make way for the new I-55 freeway. In the process, Federal funds were allocated toward the development of a new subdivision called French Fort. Because of the government's role, French Fort was one of the first neighborhoods in Memphis to explicitly prohibit any sales restrictions based on race. The neighborhood attracted predominantly Black residents, since opportunities to purchase a brand new home were few and far between for Black homebuyers in the early 1960s.

In the early 1900s, the two remaining Mississippian mounds and surrounding land were designated parkland under the name Jackson Mound Park. It was renamed DeSoto Park by the Memphis Park Commission in 1913, and in 1997, it was once again renamed and placed on the National Register of Historic Places as Chickasaw Heritage Park. In honor of the rich history of native peoples in the area, a statue and historical marker can be found in the northeast corner of the park on Metal Museum Drive.

Today, French Fort continues to be a proud and tight-knit community and is beginning to see new growth. After decades of neglect and disrepair, the remains of the Marine Hospital underwent renovation and reinvention as luxury apartments called the Marine Residence, welcoming new neighbors since 2020.

*For more information about the history of this area, please visit our website.*

**OUR MISSION**

*To preserve, promote, and advance the art and craft of fine metalwork.*

METAL MUSEUM

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MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38106
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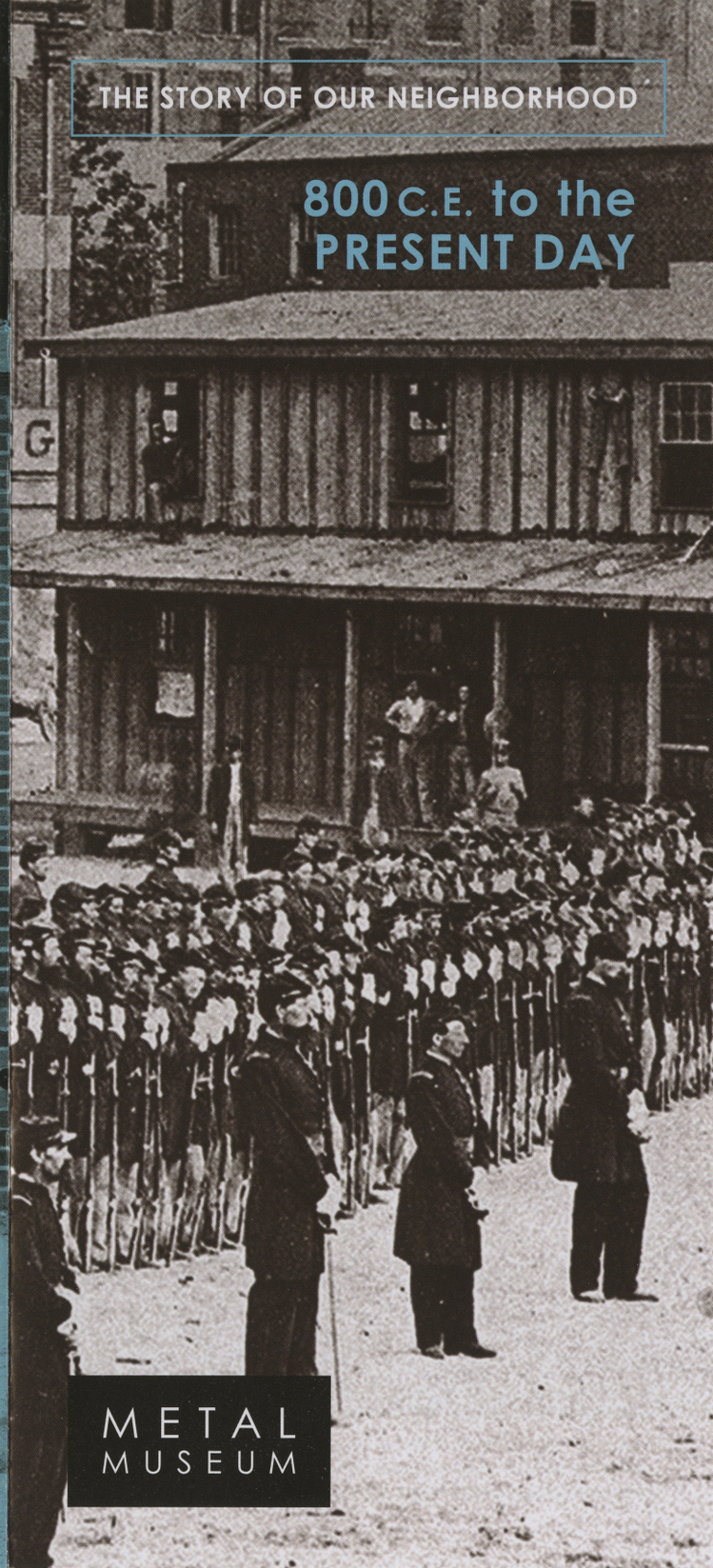
THE STORY OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

# 800 C.E. to the PRESENT DAY



METAL MUSEUM

# THE STORY OF THE MUSEUM NEIGHBORHOOD

***The Metal Museum is located on the fourth Chickasaw Bluff, one of a series of high bluffs that rise 50-200 feet above the Mississippi River flood plain between Fulton and Memphis, TN.***

## THE MOUNDS & CHICKASAW HERITAGE PARK

The earliest known inhabitants of this land were prehistoric Mississippian Native Americans who occupied the area from approximately 800 to 1500 C.E. They were a mound building civilization, and their village contained buildings and earthen platform mounds that were used for political or religious purposes. At one time, there were as many as seven mounds in the area currently known as Chickasaw Heritage Park. It is believed to be the site where Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto first viewed the Mississippi River in 1541. After the Mississippian village was abandoned by the original mound builders, members of the Chickasaw Nation would occupy this land until the 1800s.

One of the two remaining Native American Mounds, thought to have been originally used for religious or political purposes, was hollowed out and used as ammunitions storage during the Civil War.

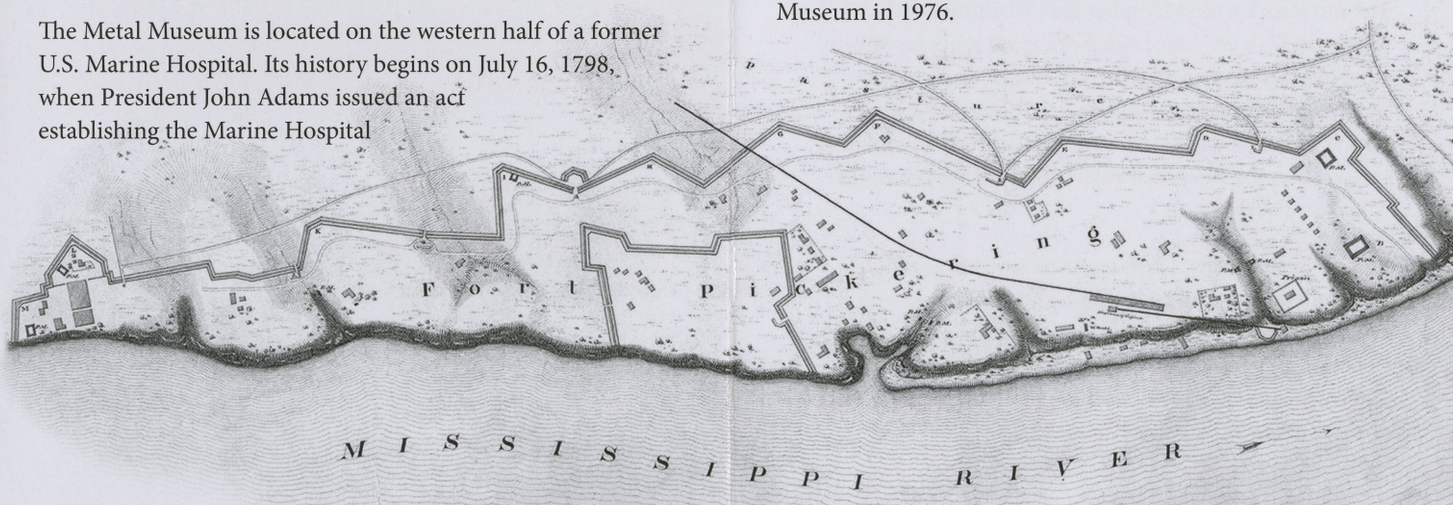
## COLONIZATION & THE CIVIL WAR

During the 18th and 19th century, Chickasaw Heritage Park would be the site of several notable historical events. In 1739, the French fortification Fort Assumption was constructed on the fourth Chickasaw Bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. Its purpose was the removal of the Chickasaw peoples for French settlement and expansion in the region. While the Chickasaw Campaign of 1739 was unsuccessful, the land transferred ownership from the French to the newly independent United States in 1796. Less than 40 years later, the Indian Removal Act was passed, and members of the Chickasaw Nation were forcibly resettled to lands west of the Mississippi River.

In 1861, the Civil War era Fort Pickering was constructed by the Confederate army. By summer of 1862, the fort was captured and converted into a 2-mile-long command post for Union forces. It was a major fortification that extended along much of the Memphis bluff line, from Chickasaw Heritage Park to present-day Beale Street. Housing numerous buildings including a hospital, rail depot, water works, and a sawmill, the site became one of the great supply depots and staging areas during the Civil War. During this time, the two existing mounds were hollowed out and used for ammunitions bunkers and gun encasements. Brick tunnel entrances on the mounds can still be seen today.

## THE MARINE HOSPITAL

The Metal Museum is located on the western half of a former U.S. Marine Hospital. Its history begins on July 16, 1798, when President John Adams issued an act establishing the Marine Hospital

A postcard of the Marine Hospital and bridges, c. 1944.

Service. The first Marine Hospital built to serve this region was located in Napoleon, AR, but was washed away by the Mississippi River in the 1870s. Memphis was selected as the new site for the Marine Hospital, and when it opened in 1884 it consisted of six buildings—the surgeon's house, a stable, the executive building, two wards, and the nurses' building. Only two of the original buildings survive today: the nurses' building (located on the property adjacent to the Metal Museum), and the executive building (now the Museum's Library + Learning Space). Several new Works Progress Administration buildings were added to the site in the 1930s, including the three-story main hospital wing that faces Metal Museum Drive. When the hospital closed in 1965, the property was divided into two parcels. The City of Memphis acquired the western portion of the site, containing the executive building, nurses' dormitory, and junior officers' quarters, which would be leased to the Metal Museum in 1976.